

REMARKS

Claims 1-16 remain in this application. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Independent claim 1 is again rejected, along with dependent claims 2, 3, and 6-8, as being anticipated by either European Patent Application EP 0 861 802 to Gonjo et al. or U.S. Patent 4,946,667 to Beshty. Reconsideration of each of these rejections is once again requested. As noted in the previously filed Reply, while fins 27 and catalytic combustion portions 6a, 6b of the Gonjo et al. apparatus serve to minimize a stacked-direction temperature distribution in the reforming portion 4 as discussed, for example, from column 19, line 48 to column 20, line 1 of the Gonjo et al. patent, nothing suggests that the Gonjo et al. fins and catalytic combustion portions constitute a normalizing stage by which temperature valleys and peaks of the gas flow are equalized to within a temperature range below a maximal allowable reformer inlet temperature as claim 1 particularly requires. As also noted in the previously filed Reply, although the gaseous mixture contained in the Beshty coil 13 is superheated to a temperature of about 700° - 1,100°F in burner 14 and is supplied to the reformer 18 at a desired superheated temperature and a desired pressure as described in lines 27-48 in column 3 of the Beshty patent, nothing suggests that any portion of the superheater coil 13 constitutes a normalizing stage by which temperature valleys and peaks of the gas flow are equalized to within a temperature range below a maximal allowable reformer inlet temperature as claim 1 particularly requires.

In sections 2 and 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner mischaracterizes the "for equalizing temperature valleys and peaks" limitation previously appearing in claim 1 as an "intended use" limitation. The limitation referred to, however, is in fact a positive functional limitation and not an intended use limitation, and the discussions of "intended use" limitations provided by the Examiner in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Office Action are inappropriate. The terminology of claim 1 is modified above, moreover, and currently amended claim 1 structurally distinguishes the claimed invention from the Gonjo et al. reforming apparatus

and the Beshty reformer configuration by specifying that the claimed gas generation system includes a normalizing stage connected between the evaporator and the reformer by which temperature valleys and peaks of the gas flow are equalized to within a temperature range below a maximal allowable reformer inlet temperature. This limitation is not met by either the Gonjo et al. reforming apparatus or the Beshty reformer configuration.

Currently amended claim 1 is not anticipated by either the Gonjo et al. publication or the U.S. Patent 4,946,667 to Beshty patent, and the same documents are relied on in the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) set forth in section 6 on page 5 of the Office Action. It is accordingly submitted that claim 1 is patentable over both the Gonjo et al. disclosure and the Beshty disclosure, and that dependent claims 2-8 are patentable over these disclosures as well.

All claims of this application are also rejected as unpatentable over newly cited U.S. Patent application publication 2002/0031450 to Yamashita et al. Reconsideration of this rejection is also requested.

Initially, it is again submitted that the Examiner mischaracterizes certain limitations appearing in claim 1 as "intended use" limitations. The limitations referred to in the last paragraph of section 7 on page 7 of the Office Action are in fact positive functional limitations and not intended use limitations. In any event, it is impermissible to simply disregard limitations of a claim, whether functional or not, by asserting that such limitations "do not have patentable weight." The discussion of "intended use" limitations provided by the Examiner in the last paragraph of section 7 of the Office Action, again, is inappropriate.

Combustion portion 6 and vaporizing portion 7 of the Yamashita et al. device, moreover, are considered by the Examiner to be at least part of "a normalizing stage." However, while the Yamashita et al. disclosure specifies that the vaporizing portion 7 utilizes heat generated by the combustion portion 6 to vaporize reformat fuel, nothing suggests that the Yamashita et al. vaporizing and combustion portions constitute a normalizing stage as claim 1 particularly requires or equalize temperature valleys and peaks of a gas flow as claim 9 particularly requires. Nothing relied on by the Examiner suggests modifying the

Yamashita et al. device so as to meet the limitations referred to, moreover, and both claim 1 and claim 9 as they appear above are patentable. Claims 2-8, which depend on claim 1, and claims 10-16, which depend on claim 9, are patentable as well. All claims of this application, therefore, are now patentable.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after consideration of this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Date: April 15, 2005

Respectfully submitted,



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